Newfoundland and Labrador

Throne Speech 1992

SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

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of
The Fourth Session
of
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of the
Province of Newfoundland

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by
His Honour
The Honourable Frederick W. Russell, C.M., LL.D.
Lieutenant-Governor

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

I am greatly honoured to present my first opening Address to this Honourable House since my Installation as Lieutenant-Governor. I take great pride in welcoming you to this Fourth Session of the Forty-first General Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland.

At the time I took my Oath of Office, I indicated that it was my wish to bring the Office of the Lieutenant-Governor to more people outside St. John's and, in particular, to those living in rural areas of Newfoundland and Labrador. While I have already had the opportunity to meet many people in the Province in my new role, I look forward to my future travels so that the people will come to know that the Office of the Lieutenant-Governor is here to serve them all.

Since my Honourable Predecessor's last Address to you, the Province has witnessed the passing of a distinguished Newfoundlander and Canadian - the Honourable Joseph R. Smallwood. Mr. Smallwood will long be remembered for his determination in bringing Newfoundland into Confederation and his unwavering commitment to improve the lot of our people. The number of those who came from across the Province and the nation to this House of Assembly to pay their last respects to Mr. Smallwood attested to the far reaching nature of his accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

When My Government was elected by the people of this Province in 1989, it endeavoured to chart new directions for a physically, socially and economically healthy future for the whole of our society. Much progress has been made on all fronts and will continue to be made over the current term of My Government's mandate. However, as Canadians and as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we are facing unprecedented new challenges at the present time. Indeed, as a nation and as a province, we are truly at a critical crossroad in our history in a constitutional sense, in an economic sense, and with respect to the state of our public finances.

My Ministers are particularly concerned about the serious nature of the economic circumstances currently facing the Province. Our resource based economy has been hard hit by the national economic recession. Prices for most of our exports have been depressed and this, coupled with the high dollar and relatively high interest rates, has made for difficult times for many local business enterprises. And while Newfoundland

has performed better statistically than some of the other provinces through the recession, the human dimension of the problem in terms of the increased numbers of unemployed and the strain on our social fabric has been just as serious.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The severe impact, on all sectors of the fishing industry, of the significant reductions in quotas which have been occurring over the past several years has been dramatically compounded by the recent decisions related to the Northern Cod stock. Moreover, the magnitude of these reductions, as reflected in a sharp decline in fish landings and the economic output of the industry, will impact severely on virtually every sector of our Province's society and the economy generally. The human dimension of this resource crisis cannot simply be measured in the loss of jobs and income. Indeed, from an historical perspective, the impact of this crisis on our society and economy at large must rank as one of the greatest burdens that we, as a people, have had to bear.

Unfortunately, there is no short term solution to the resource problems confronting the fishing industry, and any significant improvement over the medium to longer term will require management decisions that give priority to conservation and stock rebuilding. In this context, My Government has, over the past several years, persistently implored the Government of Canada to so manage and undertake a comprehensive resource rebuilding strategy for our key groundfish stocks. Apart from supporting quota reductions in our domestic fisheries sector at a level sufficient to allow the stocks to regenerate on a sustained basis, and promoting an expanded seal harvest, the Province has called upon the Government of Canada to effectively address the pillage of our groundfish stocks on the "Nose" and "Tail" of the Grand Banks by foreign fleets, particularly from the European Community member states of Portugal and Spain. The Northern Cod quota reductions which have been announced in recent days reinforce the need for immediate and effective action in this regard.

The overfishing activities of these foreign fleets represent an affront to the true meaning of sustainable development, not only in the Canadian context but also in the international environmental context. The European Community, in particular, has clearly demonstrated an abrasive insensitivity to the impact of its fleet activity on our fishing industry and our people, and on the future of those stocks as a major source of food for the people of the world. Efforts on the diplomatic front over the years to address this serious matter have been a dismal failure. My Government has concluded

that the Government of Canada must aggressively raise the level of international awareness of the mammoth proportions of the environmental disaster being perpetrated on the Grand Banks. It is now clear that the only effective manner to address this totally unacceptable situation is to exert custodial management over the "Nose" and "Tail" of the Grand Banks on behalf of and for the benefit of the international community. Canada, as the coastal state having the greatest interest in straddling stocks in these two environmentally sensitive areas, must implement effective fisheries management and enforcement measures on the "Nose" and "Tail" to ensure that our vital national interests are protected. This is a message which My Government will be taking to the Canadian people and the international community in the days ahead.

In addition to addressing the foreign overfishing issue and taking other resource management actions to foster the recovery of our fish stocks, My Government believes that concurrent action is necessary to deal with the rapidly expanding seal population. To this end, My Ministers strongly support an aggressive harvest and cull of the seal population off the coast of this Province. Such action is likely to generate some opposition nationally and internationally, but we must not allow this to deter us from acting in a responsible and prudent manner to address what is clearly a major problem. My Ministers find it extremely difficult in this context to comprehend the previously adopted positions of many nations on the commercial seal hunt. Some of those same countries now flagrantly disregard basic sustainable development principles with respect to the commercial fishery on the "Nose" and "Tail" of the Grand Banks.

The problems confronting the fishing industry must be addressed in a national context within a clear policy focus by the Government of Canada. Under our nation's Constitution, the responsibility for fisheries management rests with the national government, and to date it has been insistent on retaining exclusive control over all management decisions. The Government of Canada must, therefore, accept responsibility for addressing the consequences of those decisions. Effective response measures to deal with the economic and social dimensions of ongoing quota reductions must be implemented, and in a sensitive and responsible manner. My Government has repeatedly assured the Government of Canada that it is prepared to give its full cooperation in developing an appropriate economic diversification and adjustment program. This will help minimize employment and income losses, and build a stronger, more viable fishery for the future. Traditional make work approaches will not be acceptable in the present context since it would be totally unfair to have innocent fishermen and plant workers bear responsibility for uncontrolled foreign overfishing,

an expanding seal population, and wrong management decisions that have resulted in quota reductions. A long term income stabilization program for the fisheries sector as a whole must be a priority consideration, as well as specific income support measures for families affected by the current situation. Moreover, it is obvious that the Government of Canada must allocate more resources to undertake adequate research for the proper management of the entire fishery resource. Appropriate steps must also be taken to ensure the maintenance of critical infrastructure and human capabilities to prosecute the fishery in a responsible and proficient manner once the stocks recover. Greater attention will also have to be placed on making the fishery of the future more market sensitive in so far as opportunities to maximize the potential value of fish products are concerned. This will require, among other things, more focus on such factors as quality, secondary processing and effective marketing arrangements.

The dramatic transformation which is occurring in our most important industry affects every aspect of our society from both a social and economic perspective. It is this very consideration and reality which demands a greater voice in all aspects of fisheries policy and management for our Province. Clearly, it is no longer acceptable for the Government of the Province to be totally removed from those fundamental fisheries related decisions which, in the final analysis, generate social and economic impacts which go far beyond the biological dimensions of fisheries management. In this context, My Government has developed a proposal for joint management of the fishery based on the establishment of a Canada/Newfoundland Fisheries Management Board. This Board would not only give the Province an effective voice in the overall management of the fishery, but it would also be the most appropriate structure through which to fully integrate fisheries management and development policies of both orders of government.

Only through action in these areas can greater stability be achieved within the fishing industry for the long term benefit of our people and our economy.

Notwithstanding the current difficulties faced in the fishing industry, My Ministers remain confident that proper management decisions taken now will provide the basis for a strong fishery in the future. My Government is committed to working constructively and closely with the federal government toward the achievement of this objective.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The Hibernia Project is of vital importance to the Province. In the short term it provides much needed employment and economic activity, however, it is even more important in the long term. It represents the first in what will hopefully be a series of offshore projects that will diversify the economic structure of the Province, enhance the base upon which our marine related industries can grow, and reduce our revenue dependence on the federal government.

Recent developments in the project have caused some uncertainty. However, the project is continuing with very significant levels of capital expenditure and employment. My Ministers are monitoring the situation closely and are optimistic about the ability of the remaining Hibernia partners to successfully find new investors.

Discussions between Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro and Hydro Quebec relative to the potential development of the hydro electric resources of the Lower Churchill River are also continuing. My Government looks forward to an acceptable and successful conclusion to these negotiations at the earliest possible time. My Ministers wish to reiterate, however, that they are not prepared to sanction an agreement which does not assure to this Province an appropriate level and quality of industrial, economic and financial benefits.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

The current economic difficulties and challenges facing our people are of considerable enormity. However, My Government believes that, just as the Province has rebounded from equally and often more daunting times in the past, our people will respond to these challenges with optimism and confidence.

In this regard, and while the Province has been shaken by recent events, My Ministers have not been deterred from developing a long term Strategic Economic Plan for the Province. Indeed, My Ministers believe that the role and importance of such a Plan in pointing the way to a better economic future for all citizens is heightened during a period of difficult economic circumstances. This is because it is often easy for governments and society at large to sacrifice long term objectives for short term remedial measures. These offer little more than immediate relief and usually fail to address the more fundamental factors affecting the basic economic structure and future of society.

To this end, and in recognition of the fact that the goal of developing a strong provincial economy cannot be achieved without the full support and involvement of the people of the Province, My Government initiated a wide-ranging and extensive public consultation process in September of 1991 on the development of a Strategic Economic Plan. The responsibility for gathering this public input and reporting back to My Ministers was assigned to the newly created Advisory Council on the Economy. This is an independent advisory organization to My Government that is composed of leaders from business, labour and other key sectors of our society. My Government is deeply appreciative of the volunteer efforts of those members of the Advisory Council who gave freely of their time to this task.

In all, over eleven thousand copies of a consultative discussion paper were distributed and thirty-six formal public meetings were held. People throughout the Province responded beyond all expectations to this process. In excess of thirteen hundred people participated in the various sessions and over two hundred and forty written briefs were received from many individuals and from a broad cross-section of business groups, academia, labour unions, and municipal and community organizations. Their constructive advice and suggestions are now being taken into account by My Ministers as they finalize the Strategic Plan.

The Advisory Council on the Economy has informed My Ministers that three primary messages were received from the public through this consultative process. First, people fully recognize that very difficult economic problems face them, and that past economic development efforts have not been as effective as they could or should have been. In particular, our excessive dependency on transfer payments, unemployment insurance and short-term make work projects was repeatedly cited as the root cause of many of our economic ills today, and that this dependency is destroying us as a people and as a vibrant society.

The second message, as conveyed by the Advisory Council, was that the public generally accepts the fact that the status quo is no longer acceptable and many fundamental changes are required to address our difficulties. People were quite emphatic that general attitudes within all elements of our society must change; that there is too much government at present; that new directions in education and training are prerequisites to a prosperous economic future; that the tax system must be reformed to better encourage enterprise development activity; and that government in partnership with business and labour must create a renewed business climate -- a

climate which is conducive to attracting meaningful investment and generating the confidence required for the sustained creation of wealth over the long-term.

The third and perhaps most significant message received was that the public overwhelmingly indicated it is ready for the type of fundamental change necessary to build a better and more prosperous social and economic future for the Province. In this regard, My Government was strongly urged throughout the public consultation process to provide the necessary leadership and direction to make change a reality -- to ensure that the Strategic Economic Plan becomes a plan of action and not simply another document that collects dust on yet another shelf.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government gives its commitment to heed this advice carefully as it finalizes the Strategic Economic Plan for release to the public in the first half of 1992. It is not My Ministers' intent to suggest that the Plan will be a panacea for all of the economic ills facing the Province. They are, however, confident that it will offer a solid strategic framework in terms of focusing My Government's economic development efforts and providing a stronger basis for joint federal-provincial action aimed at economic diversification. In this regard, My Ministers are hopeful that a major new cooperative agreement with the Government of Canada on strategic investment and industrial development will soon be ready for implementation. The positive work of Enterprise Newfoundland and Labrador will also continue and gain momentum over time as the Strategic Economic Plan is implemented. My Ministers are also hopeful that we will be able to develop, with the federal government, a plan for completion of the Trans Labrador Highway.

In addition to embracing the results of the public consultation process, the Strategic Economic Plan will reflect the fact that Newfoundland and Labrador stands at an economic crossroads today. Our Province faces a variety of challenging circumstances stemming from the globalization of economic activity, freer trading arrangements between nations, the emergence of major trading blocs, and the structural economic shift from labour-intensive to knowledge-intensive industries. Technological change, competitiveness and quality are the key to future economic growth. The Strategic Economic Plan will embody actions to address these new realities. It will not be an easy task. It will take hard work, sacrifice, much compromise and total commitment by all elements of our society. But deal with them we must -- the alternative is simply not acceptable.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

In last year's Speech from the Throne, my Predecessor identified the Province's evolving financial position as a potentially serious constraint on our ability to deliver essential services and to support economic growth in the Province.

This was followed by one of the most significant Budgets ever presented to this Honourable House. Faced with a deterioration in the growth of federal and provincial revenues and rising expenditures, My Government had to balance the needs of our population for essential services with the need to be fiscally responsible and to maintain national and international confidence in the financial integrity of the Province. Expenditure reductions, including significant layoffs throughout the public service and a general wage freeze, were implemented in order to restore the fiscal balance necessary to maintain the integrity of the Province's finances. The corrective action My Government had to take did not come easy to My Ministers, but it had to be taken.

While those difficult decisions clearly resulted in an improvement in the overall fiscal outlook for the Province, recent events related to the slow-down in the Hibernia Project, the impact of the recession and the reductions made to the Northern Cod quota will present new challenges for My Ministers as they prepare and finalize the 1992 Budget. As well, the economic problems being experienced in the rest of the country are placing pressure on the level of equalization and other fiscal transfers from the Government of Canada. My Government is resolved, however, to continue to practice responsible financial management and will be taking appropriate measures in the upcoming Budget to meet this ongoing challenge.

Notwithstanding the difficult budgetary goals set and fulfilled by My Government over the past several years, My Ministers are acutely aware of the role of fiscal policy in creating a favourable business development and investment climate in the Province. To this end, My Government is continuing its tax reform efforts and will announce several new, positive directions in this domain in the coming year.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

Our Province is blessed in many ways. Our natural beauty and wilderness qualities are envied throughout the world. My Government is committed to preserving and promoting this richness. Accordingly, in the coming year it will be a priority of My

Government to provide additional resources to the Department of Environment and Lands to ensure that environmental management issues are given increased attention. This will allow My Government to pursue a number of significant new initiatives over the coming year to protect and enhance our physical environment.

Included among these initiatives will be legislation to deal with the persistent and chronic problem of abandoned vehicle wrecks which scar our countryside. Such forms of environmental neglect and disrespect are simply unacceptable. A firm and decisive approach to this problem will be proposed to this Honourable House in this Session.

Another environmental issue My Government will seek to address in this Session is the disposal of waste oil products. At present, only a very small percentage of such products used in the Province are being recycled, while the remainder enters the environment through road oiling, landfilling and other means. My Government is exploring opportunities for alternative disposal practices as well as means of encouraging recycling where feasible.

Another pervasive waste management issue is that of beverage container disposal. Over the past number of years, My Government has become increasingly concerned with the problem of general litter and, specifically, the extent to which beverage containers contribute to this problem. Some measures have been mounted by industry to deal with this matter, including a thrust towards recycling. Following a careful review of the progress made, however, My Government has concluded that new approaches and direct government action will be necessary to address this persistent problem. To this end, My Government intends to act definitively with the introduction this Session of legislation to control the use and disposal of packaging in general, and specifically to reduce the littering of beverage containers and to encourage their recycling where economically feasible. In taking these actions, My Government is cognizant that a new regulatory system for container waste management could have certain undesirable effects on industry and consumers if it is not developed in a sensitive and practical manner.

My Government has also recently evaluated the impact of all-terrain vehicles on our environment, with a view to identifying measures to mitigate their negative impacts, particularly in sensitive areas such as wetlands. To date, environmental controls or legislation governing the use of these vehicles has been minimal. My Government believes the time has come to address this problem and therefore intends to introduce, in the near future, appropriate regulatory controls on those all-terrain

vehicles that pose the greatest threat to our environment. This will be accomplished in a manner which is sensitive both to traditional patterns of use of these vehicles for commercial, industrial and recreational pursuits, and to the needs of the environment.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

Our system of provincial parks which extends across the Province serves to protect and preserve important aspects of our flora and fauna and provides extensive recreational opportunities for our people. The parks system is also an integral part of the Province's tourism infrastructure. My Government feels it is an appropriate time to take stock of our provincial parks system, to refocus it, and to chart positive new directions. To this end, My Government will be taking immediate steps to establish an internal Task Force on Provincial Parks. Its mandate will be to develop, in consultation with various interested groups, a master plan for the parks system as a whole. In Labrador, My Government will seek to advance this objective by indicating to the Government of Canada that it is prepared to participate, in conjunction with the people of Labrador, including native groups, in feasibility studies for the possible establishment of national parks in the Torngat Mountain and Mealy Mountain areas.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

I am very proud of My Government's concern for and commitment to preserving the environment of our beautiful Province. The initiatives I have outlined are indicative of the strength of this concern and signal a new era of environmental awareness in this Province.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government recognizes the important link between economic and social policy. Nowhere is it more significant than in the field of education.

As My Government indicated at the beginning of its mandate, it is committed to reform of our educational system which would see both the allocation of additional resources and a significant redeployment of existing resources to the areas of greatest need within the system. The first significant step in this process was the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Delivery of Programs and Services in Primary,

Elementary and Secondary Education. The Commission will soon be reporting and My Government is confident that it will provide the basis for this fundamental reform.

My Government has consistently stated that the school tax would either be abolished or reformed. The existing school tax is most regressive in its burden, wasteful in its collection and unfair in its distribution. As My Government has already announced, this tax will be abolished and replaced by a more equitable means of taxation and revenue distribution. Legislation to give effect to this will be introduced in this Session.

My Government is also reviewing other facets of our education system to ensure that the rights and responsibilities of students, parents and school boards are relevant to today's environment. To this end, My Ministers are currently examining the existing Schools Act to identify possible areas where improvements and reform are warranted.

On a personal note, I wish to express the view that our greatest resource - and indeed our greatest hope for the future - is our young people. Unfortunately, the extent to which they are dropping out of high school prematurely is undermining their ability to equip themselves educationally for their future. As I travel throughout the Province and meet with as many young people as possible, I will encourage them to complete their high school education, and to continue their studies at the post-secondary level so they will be prepared for the challenges of today's world.

These initiatives will, collectively, help ensure the future education of our children.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

As I stated earlier, My Government fully recognizes the difficult economic times being endured by the Province and indeed the entire country. It is critically important that we maintain our social safety net during this period. Low income families and single parents often need help in providing the necessities of life. Housing is one of these necessities. My Government has recently approved a long term plan for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. A critical component of this plan is continued assistance for people who cannot afford housing on their own. The Corporation will continue to ensure that people who do not have sufficient personal resources are not deprived of an acceptable place to live.

Jobs are being lost every day as a result of the recession and the restructuring being undertaken by employers. My Government, in conjunction with the Government of Canada, will continue various adjustment programs now in place to assist displaced workers.

One of our most important social programs is the Workers' Compensation system. The integrity of this system is being fundamentally threatened because of a rapidly escalating unfunded liability. My Government has now received the Report of the Statutory Review Committee and has consulted widely with employer and employee groups on its recommendations. My Ministers are considering proposals to address this problem and restore the integrity of the system. You will be asked to make the changes in law necessary to achieve this objective.

Coupled with initiatives that are focused on restoring the financial integrity of the Workers' Compensation Program, My Government plans to embark on new initiatives in the occupational health and safety field. Details will be announced in this Session of the House of Assembly.

Unfortunately, family violence and child abuse continue to be major social problems. The Hughes Commission Report will soon be released and hopefully its recommendations will go a long way to assisting My Government and society in general in addressing what is clearly an insidious social problem. As further evidence of its commitment to the protection of innocent children, My Government will be presenting a new Child Welfare Act to this Honourable House Assembly this Session. The new legislation will be the culmination of a consultation process that has included widespread public and professional input. This legislation is long overdue; however, when completed, it will fully reflect current professional practice and philosophy in the area of child welfare and protection.

My Government is convinced of the need, and has demonstrated through last year's Budget its willingness, to spend our health care dollars more effectively. The constant emergence of new health care technology and the changing societal demographics dictate the need for new and innovative approaches to health care delivery. My Government is committed to improving the quality of health care to residents of the Province through economies of scale, the judicious use of new technology, and the maintenance and development of highly skilled health care professionals. My Government also supports a sound community health care system where the necessary supports are made available directly in local communities. To this end, My Govern-

ment intends to establish Regional Community Health Boards across the Province which will be responsible for the delivery and co-ordination of all community based services. My Government has appointed a Task Force, with representation from all involved groups, to advise on the implementation of this very positive initiative.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

Constitutional discussions on the future of our country have intensified over the past twelve months with the release of the Government of Canada's twenty-eight proposals for renewal of the Canadian federation, the appointment of the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee, the establishment of provincial and territorial consultative committees, and the series of national policy conferences held across the country. The Special Joint Parliamentary Committee submitted its report a few days ago.

My Government has participated constructively in this process by establishing a provincial committee to hear the views of the citizens of this Province and through appearances before the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee as well as the national policy conferences. While My Government remains convinced that a Constituent Assembly is the most appropriate process to achieve a national consensus on a renewed and unified Canada, My Government's participation in the established process demonstrates its commitment to contribute positively to the achievement of a lasting resolution that fairly accommodates the legitimate aspirations of all Canadians in all regions of the country.

In the national discussions which will ensue from the current processes, My Ministers intend to work vigorously for constitutional change that reflects a number of fundamental principles. In this regard, My Government believes that Canada has a national identity more than the sum of its parts; that every citizen is equal to every other citizen; that every province is equal in its status and rights as a province; that all governments should be obligated to promote equal opportunities for all Canadians and the reduction of social and economic disparities within the country; that Canada is a nation founded on the basis of two languages, two cultures, and two legal systems which should be appropriately recognized in the Constitution; and that the right of aboriginal Canadians to preserve their culture, language and way of life within their lands and to self-government within those lands should be similarly acknowledged in the Constitution. While equality of citizens and provinces are cornerstones of these principles, that does not mean that all constitutional provisions for our citizens and provinces must be identical. There can be different provisions to accommodate the

legitimate concerns of different parts of the country, but those different provisions must result in fair and balanced treatment for all Canadians wherever they live, and regardless of their racial origin or language.

My Government is committed to a strong, united Canada. The constitutional problems that beset the nation today must be resolved expeditiously to ensure future economic prosperity and social well-being for both Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador. Accordingly, shortly My Government will lay before you the Report of the Provincial Constitutional Committee and use that document as a guide in the weeks and months ahead in its discussions with the other provinces and the Government of Canada as we seek to achieve a successful resolution of our constitutional problems.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

My Government plans to place a number of important pieces of legislation before you this Session in addition to the legislative measures to which I have already referred. During the last Session, My Government introduced a most significant piece of legislation to reform the overall process of electing Members to this Honourable House and the financing of elections. You did not have time to complete your consideration of this legislation, but one of your Committees has done substantial work in the meantime. You will again be asked to pass this important piece of legislation.

A full listing of My Government's legislative agenda for this Session of the House of Assembly will be tabled at the earliest opportunity so that all Honourable Members can properly prepare for the upcoming proceedings.

During the course of this Session, you will also be asked to grant supply to Her Majesty.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

During the public consultation process on My Government's Strategic Economic Plan, the Newfoundland and Labrador Rural Development Council stated, and I quote, "For too long the ship of state has been left to the mercy of the winds, blown hither and yon on an unchartered ocean rife with navigational hazards of every description. Now, more than ever before, we need a strong hand on the tiller, a captain with his or

her wits about them, and a crew more or less in agreement as to the eventual destination", unquote.

The people of this Province gave My Government a mandate for change -- one involving renewal and revitalization of our society, our economy and the way in which government itself operates. My Government has responded to this challenge in a positive and decisive manner. A clear direction for the future is being charted to guide us carefully around the perils of chance toward open seas of opportunity and a brighter horizon. My Ministers are committed to continue on this course and, as the Rural Development Council so aptly stated, to keep a firm hand on the tiller towards a healthy future for the whole of our society and the generations to come.

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly:

I invoke God's blessing upon you as you commence your labours in this Fourth Session of the Forty-first General Assembly. May Divine Providence guide you in your deliberations.